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Water Safety Update

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Introduction:

This report is provided by Avon Fire & Rescue Service to the Economic & Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel of Bath & North East Somerset Council.

In January 2011 Avon Fire & Rescue Service attended the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to present information on the work they were conducting to raise awareness of water safety in B&NES.

The panel heard how the Fire & Rescue Service were delivering water awareness training into schools and conducting public awareness initiatives. The panel are keen to have an update on progress and Avon Fire & Rescue Service has been invited to the November 2011 meeting of the Economic & Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel to give an update.

Activities undertaken:

Over 1200 children in schools across B&NES have been provided with water awareness and basic life support first aid by the Fire & Rescue Service. This figure is scheduled to rise to 1500 by December 2011. The age ranges covered include 11-18 year olds. This activity was supported by B&NES Council Community Safety Team who have very kindly sponsored the essential training equipment for these training interventions.

A number of campaigns have run featuring publicity materials.



The themes chosen were based on risk – such as swimming during spring, and alcohol consumption during summer, – with work underway on a party theme to follow during the festive season.

Supportive media coverage during the local news programs has supplemented the message, and this has been further supplemented by exposure in local newspapers that have also been equally supportive and responsible in getting the message across.

Engagement:

From the point at which the Fire & Rescue Service sat alone at the O&S in January, there has been a very positive reception for our work, and also the take up and progression of allied matters.

The Council and Police have jointly sponsored a risk based report into the safety of the river by The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), a project the Fire & Rescue Service were happy to provide direct assistance with.

The Council's Community Safety team have not only sponsored the Fire & Rescue Service training equipment, but also have put interventions in place with both of Bath's universities so that the Council's excellent Taxi Marshal scheme can provide support and assistance to individuals at risk. The Council's Community Safety Team's 'Student Watch' group is working closely with the Students Union and the Fire Service to facilitate creation, ownership and dissemination of safety messages to the University campuses. Universities and Students Unions are planning new student year awareness campaigns supported by the Council and the Fire & Rescue Service.

Education have been proactive with schools engaging fully with the water awareness training, providing time for about 1500 students to receive the delivery during term time this year.

Commerce across the City have embraced the message and supported the display of publicity.

- Media – supportive reporting supportive messaging
- Commercial/Retail Sector
 - Every Clothing store in Southgate has taken publicity materials for public/staff areas
- Night Time Economy
 - Licensed Trade – Bath City Centre Pubs (Pubwatch) have taken and displayed publicity materials
 - Takeaways – taken and displayed publicity materials
- RoSPA – Provided Report Risk Assessment
 - Avon & Somerset Police and Council Environmental Services – Joint Sponsor of the RoSPA Report.
 - Avon Fire & Rescue assisted with the site visit, the assessment of risk and the incident statistics.

Outcomes:

There have been positive outcomes to this initial approach and to all this subsequent activity. Clearly awareness of the issues has been raised in a responsible manner, and precipitated actions such as the commissioning of the RoSPA report and the other actions in this report which have also followed.

In practical and measurable outcomes, one notable impact has been that **calls to Avon Fire & Rescue Service for rescues or evacuations from water for the first nine months of 2011 have halved.** This is compared with Avon Fire & Rescue Service's data for the first nine months of last year (2010).

Our interactions with people, especially students and children show that people are aware of the Water Safety agenda, the issues and this awareness has been achieved in a mutually supportive and non alarmist way.

There is now a RoSPA report in place which will build on these interventions with proposals for other more definitive solutions for the ongoing management of River Safety.

Finally in their November edition of 'Staying Alive' Peter Cornall, Head of Leisure Safety for RoSPA recognised the lead being set in B&NES. He went on to suggest that "This is an approach which needs to be adopted elsewhere, attempts to break the chain in more than one place at the same time is likely to have more success than just trying a single isolated initiative."



Denis McCann
Unitary Manager
Bath & North East Somerset